

A Most Notable Citizen by Charles Harrington

Nelson Hyatt has lived in the Champlain Valley for 94 years. He is known as an honest, honorable, sincere, and God loving man. Nelson's childhood years were spent in Crown Point on Whitford Hill, close to where the hill road turns on to the White Church road near what used to be Moonhill Garage. His early school years were spent at Moonhill Graded School. The family scratched out a living on a 35 acre side hill farm. They kept four cows which enabled the family to make around \$10.00 a week on cream. When the depression hit, Nelson's father bargained for an adjoining meadow thereby allowing him to put on more cows. "My father had a mowing machine but refused to purchase a rake because he had four strong sons that could rake the hay," says Nelson. "I knew how to build a load of hay that would hold. I'd fork the hay to the corners and work it toward the center, that way the individual stacks of hay would push on each other and stay the load. We kept a garden that provided us all the vegetables to get through the winter. Most of our plantings were made with seeds saved from the previous year. We had our farm animals - pigs, chickens, a horse and of course the cows.. We all worked at surviving. My father would cut brush along the roads after haying was done, and us boys mowed cemeteries. Dad couldn't get on the WPA because he had some money in the bank. That exasperated my parents but they were of the hardy Adirondack type and continued to get by. There were five of us boys with Herbert being the oldest. He died at age twelve of appendicitis. His appendix had burst and although he had been taken to the hospital, soon died of peritonitis.

We didn't have running water and with the well set quite a ways back of the house, lugging water was a daily routine. Sometimes with a sweltering July and August the well would give out. We would then draw water from a spring located about half a mile down the road. Trucking water from the spring gave us a chance to catch up on the news since when our well gave out so would the surrounding neighbors. We looked forward to lunch as a pie was always centered on the table. Our mother would can all the fruits harvested. The area mountains provided an abundance of succulent blueberries and blackberries the size of one thumb.. We had a raspberry patch and of course apples and pumpkins were utilized. Late afternoons would witness sweet spicy smells lofting from the wood fueled kitchen stove. As pie was the finale at lunch, cake was the last entree at supper. Alladin kerosene lamps were our source of lights in the house. In the barn we used kerosene lanterns. We washed up daily but the Saturday Night bath was thorough and made us presentable for the Sabbath. The water was heated in the cook stove reservoir and in copper reservoirs placed on top of the stove."

"My last two years of high school," says Nelson, "were spent at Sherman Free Academy known locally as Moriah High School. I stayed at my uncle's farm where I milked twelve cows morning and night. I got so that I could milk all twelve in one hour. The herd was mostly Holsteins and Jerseys with a few mixed breeds. I made \$3.00 a week for my milking skills which I saved for college. Soon after graduation Earl, one of my brothers, and I were off to Sanantonio, Texas where we registered for a three year course in Chiropractic Application at Texas Chiropractic College."

"When my brother and I returned from Texas with our degrees in hand we knew it was only a matter of time before our country would be forced into war. And in that case we figured there was no need of borrowing money to set up a practice. So we came up with a plan whereby we would be able to make and save money for that time when the war was over. We would then come home and be able to set up our Chiropractic Offices."

Our plan involved logging. Wallace, one of my brothers who had a 1928 Ford Roadster with a rumble seat went to Glens Falls and committed us to a contract with Finch and Puyne to cut wood. We agreed to cut 300 cords of poplar out on Blue Ridge.. We'd load up Monday morning with everything we needed to keep us going till Wednesday afternoon late when we'd come out and get resupplied and

see to it that our saws got sharpened. Our Mother would fill us a basket with fresh baked bread, homemade cottage cheese, fresh milk, home canned beef and chicken along with slabs of salted pork. Of course, she topped the baskets off with a carefully packed pie and cake along with just about anything she knew we'd want. Our father would touch up our crosscuts and buck saws. (He was the best man on a sharpening job as he had the right touch when it came to putting on an edge. Men would bring their saws from miles around and he would fix them up for \$.25 a saw). Back to Blue Ridge we'd go and work from sun up to sun down. After yanking and yarning on a crosscut all day one didn't need any entertainment. As soon as we ate, to bed we'd go, rise up just before daybreak and start over again. First, we'd fell a mess of trees. We divided the work with two men on a crosscut and two men using the buck saws to trim. When we got a goodly amount we would drag them out. My brother had a horse, nothing special, a mongrel of a thing but that horse did us well. We'd get the logs out in June by the latest and then with a special tool we would cut a strip in the tree from top to bottom which would allow us to easily strip the bark. The poplar had to be cut by early June, otherwise the bark wouldn't strip easy. All this was cut on my grandfather's land. The next year he sold out to Finch and Puyne but kept a life lease on the old hotel and bar. That's where we slept -in the bar. My mother wouldn't be very happy about that but the bar was closed so we supposed it was okay." (When my grandparents died Finch and Puyne burned the place so as not to have to pay taxes on it).

"The second year I bought a brand new 1941 Ford one ton for \$1000.00, had to borrow the money but we knew we'd make it back. We put some good strong racks on it that cost another \$100.00 and we were ready. I'd put on a load during the day and get back by late afternoon. My brother would load up at night and make another run. The four of us would trade off felling trees to trimming. That made the work go faster and was easier on our backs. Our breakfast consisted of a lot of oatmeal and regular breakfast food. We needed to eat a lot because we kept those wood chips just a flying. The mosquitoes and blackflies could be troublesome. We had a black oily salve, I forget the name of it, we'd put that on two or three times a day and go about our business. Sometimes, we'd just let 'em bite. The loading area was so narrow we couldn't turn around so we would have to back all the way in and across a log bridge with logs placed along the side so hopefully we wouldn't turn off.

Not much bothered us from work, if it rained we kept on, but with a hard thundering storm we would let up for awhile. We stayed out there through hunting season. That's when my father would come out and guide. He was known all around for his hunting skills and got a lot of jobs guiding. He was a terrific shot. I wasn't the best shot but I got a few bucks in my time.

On Saturdays when we'd come out, my father would have a large pile of chunks ready for me to split. I had a special and easy way of getting the job done. I would go to the top of the pile and start splitting, throwing the split pieces off to the side as I went. It went faster that way. My old boots had a lot of nicks from the ax but I never got cut.

I never smoked. And to get around taking a cigarette when offered, I bought myself a pack of Chesterfields and put them in my shirt pocket. When someone offered me a smoke I would pat my shirt pocket and say, "No, I got my own." I carried that pack around for years. My mother didn't think much of that.

We went off to war. Wallace, when going through the initial army assignments told the authorities that he was a farmer. They made him a fireman. We always kind'a thought that that might have been as a result of his Adirondack accent. I wound up in Germany, and later on so did Wallace. Two months before the war ended Wallace was killed. The army wouldn't take Earl because at 105 pounds he couldn't make the minimum weight requirements. Later on, when they were taking just about anybody they took Earl. He was stationed in Hawaii where he was assigned to balancing loads on aircraft. Kenneth was also stationed in Europe where he was assigned to search lights and radar.

When we got home, we three brothers got water piped into the house and had electricity installed. That made life much easier for our parents. Earl moved out near Rome, set up his practice

and went to raising beef. And as a point of interest, today he weighs 105 pounds! Kenneth became a barber and continues to cut hair on Main Street, Port Henry. I set up my chiropractic office in Ticonderoga, where I maintained an office for thirty-six years. In 1983 I Chiropractic Office to Crown Point. It is here with my wife, Alice and family that we maintained a large commercial vegetable garden.”

The Hyatts recently celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary. Nelson still has wonderful gardens and sells vegetables on the honor system. While his seeds are on order, he waits for the warming sun and longer days to bring on the next adventure in gardening.

To know Nelson is like being provided a gift. He is so knowledgeable and friendly, along with his full bodied smile and bright eyes, his very presence invites a conversation.

Make no doubt about it, Nelson has made all the right connections, connections with his family, friends and neighbors, with his gardens, and nature and connections with a Greater Being.

This coming summer, as one drives by the Hyatt residence, anticipate seeing a man utilizing two canes while maneuvering through his weed free rows of shoulder high tomatoes, along with rows of tasseled corn and beans loaded with their strings of fruit.. More than likely that man will be headed toward his potatoes just to make sure the beetles don't get ahead of him, – that would be Nelson. And when vegetable season arrives – stop by for a bird's eye view and witness his accomplishments!